

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 13 November 2008

Subject: Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) :
Direction of Travel self assessment- update

Report of: Service Director – Business Transformation

Contact officer: Alan Dunn x 2773

Purpose / summary: This report updates members on the Direction of Travel Self Assessment 2008 which was produced by the Council and submitted to the Audit Commission on the 8 October 2008.

The Direction of Travel Self Assessment forms part of our overall Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The full Direction of Travel document is attached at appendix 1

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: The report is provided as information to Cabinet.

Recommendation / decision: Cabinet is asked to note the report and the Direction of Travel Self Assessment at Appendix 1.

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	Within existing resources
Staffing:	Within existing resources
Policy:	Performance
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Not necessary at this stage as equality and diversity issues are considered in each area of service delivery reported here.
Wards affected:	All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or

change to the Council's asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population? No

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure? No

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?

Yes *

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?

Yes *

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

No *

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	X

	X
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	X

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to?	Date of meeting	Copy available from?

Proper Officer

Katherine Fairclough

Date

22 October 2008

- 1.1 Members will be familiar with the comprehensive performance framework (CPA) for local authorities. The framework is made up of 4 main components:
- Corporate Assessment
 - Use of Resources assessment
 - Service Assessments
 - Direction of Travel assessment

The Use of Resources, Direction of Travel and Service Assessments are all updated annually.

- 1.2 This year will see the last reporting round for CPA as it will be replaced from next year with the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

- 1.3 The Direction of Travel is aimed at providing assurance each year about whether a Council is complying with its Best Value duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.

Essentially the assessment asks two questions:

- What evidence is there of the Council improving outcomes?
- How much progress is being made to implement improvement plans to sustain improvement?

Direction of Travel is an assessment of improvement. It defines the progress made over the previous year and the plans and resources put in place to sustain and strengthen improvement.

The Direction of Travel looks at the key local priorities of the Council and considers past, present and future prospects for improvement.

- 1.4 The scoring labels for the Direction of Travel are:

- Improving strongly.
- Improving well
- Improving adequately
- Not improving adequately or not improving

- 1.5 For 2005, 2006 and 2007 Wigan Council has been assessed as “improving well”.

In 2007, Wigan was amongst 59% of Councils assessed as improving well.

In addition, in 2007 we were amongst 39% of authorities rated 4 star in terms of our overall CPA categorisation.

2.0 Direction of Travel Self Assessment 2008

- 2.1 There is no mandatory format for providing the Direction of Travel submission, nor is there a legal requirement to do so. But we believe it is a valuable exercise for monitoring our own progress and allows us to provide our view of the organisation to the Audit Commission, who will undertake the assessment with or without our own self-assessment. Whilst the content of the assessment is not stipulated by the Audit Commission, we are limited to the use of 7 sides of A4.

2.2 As part of the Audit Commission's work to form their judgement they will:

- Use findings from our use of resources assessment
- Review key council documents, including any other relevant self-assessments we have made over the last year.
- Look at our performance against key performance indicators.
- Liaise with other inspectorates and will draw on our own audit work.

They may also wish to speak to Council officers and possibly Members to supplement this information. We are advised that this fieldwork will be carried out from the submission of the document up until the 7th December.

3.0 Wigan's Direction of Travel self assessment 2008

3.1 Wigan's DoT self assessment is attached at **Appendix 1** for information. The document has embedded links to other sources of information which have been provided on a CD to the Audit Commission. It is not possible to replicate all the data sources here, but any information can be forwarded to Members on request.

The self assessment has focused on changes and improvements over the period Sept 2007 to Sept 2008.

3.2 The key messages contained in our self assessment are:

- We have continued to deliver improvements with our key partners, across Wigan's priorities.
- Our programme of service transformation has and will continue to free up resources for front-line services
- We have sustained high performance and consistently gained excellent/four star CPA categorisation.
- Our Direction of Travel over three years is positive and better than the average range for single tier authorities
- We have a stronger story for 1 year improvement than in previous years (using the audit commission's indicator set, up from 54% in 2007 to 67% in 2008).

3.3 Reference to our successful delivery of priorities and tasks includes:

- The roll out of our neighbourhood working with our partners, known as the Partnerships and Communities Together (PACT) work.
- Ongoing delivery of our Joint Service centre
- Implementation of our locality-based management information system (Wigan Information System for Dynamic On Line Maps)
- Delivery of our new Local Area Agreement
- The increased number of adults receiving direct payments, thereby supporting greater personalisation and choice.
- The validation and achievement of the Equality Standard for Local Government at level 3.
- Savings of £1.2 million achieved through the support services review.
- Creation of a single commissioning agency and innovative partnership with Ashton, Wigan and Leigh Primary Care Trust.
- Our rapidly developing Building Schools for the Future Programme and Joint Local Education Partnership with Salford.

3.4 We categorised our other good work and specific improvements under relevant headings in the assessment. The detail can be seen in the attached DoT assessment document (Appendix 1).

3.5 In the assessment we have also summarised our approach to efficiency and value for money:

Our 2008 value for money self assessment concludes that the Council continues to achieve on delivery of efficiency targets, delivers above average services for comparatively low cost and where spending is high, there are clear reasons why.

The self assessment then goes on to identify areas for improvement and priorities for 2008/11. These areas are detailed in the document in the relevant sections. This will demonstrate to the Audit Commission that we are self-aware and that we have action plans in place in order to improve.

The assessment also references our Corporate Plan priorities for 2008-11 and makes a link to the Corporate Improvement Programme and associated Chief Officer tasks to deliver those priorities.

4.0 Conclusion.

4.1 The Direction of Travel self-assessment is an important component of the overall Comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) process.

4.2 We understand that the Audit Commission will be undertaking their field work between 1st October and 7th December.

It is intended that officers will be able to meet with the Audit Commission, towards the end of November, which will give us the opportunity to test initial conclusions and provide any additional evidence if necessary.

It is anticipated that we will receive our official Direction of Travel judgement on the 16th January 2009, prior to publication on the 26th February, which will coincide with the rest of our CPA judgements.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to note the report and the content of the Direction of Travel self assessment attached at **Appendix 1**.

Wigan Council

Direction of Travel Self Assessment



October 2008

Direction of Travel Self Assessment 2008

Our Direction of Travel self-assessment for 2007/08 demonstrates how, with our partners, we have continued to deliver improvements across Wigan's priorities.

Our approach to prioritisation, through our Local Strategic Partnership and our internal resource allocation, supported by effective planning and performance management across the organisation, has achieved improvements in performance and efficiency and improved outcomes for local people.

To sustain our impressive track record of improvement we have commenced a programme of service transformation – to free up resources for front-line services through back-office efficiencies, and to further improve customer focus through targeted improvements in facilities and service delivery.

We are proud of our consistent high performance in gaining the highest CPA ratings, which recognises our commitment to continual improvement and focus on outcomes for our community. We consider that our sustained high – performance in priority areas, recognition of areas for further improvement, coupled with our approach to service transformation deserves recognition that Wigan Council continues to improve well.

What are Wigan's priorities?

The Council's priorities for 2007/08 support delivery of the priorities for Wigan, and these are outlined in our Sustainable Community Strategy.

Our direction of travel over three years is positive and better than the average range for single tier authorities - based on the Audit Commission performance profile (09/2007) for service score analysis and we have included 2007/08 data where this is not available in the profile. In addition, for our LAA we achieved performance improvements in each block, earning performance reward of £4.2million.

Our [annual review of performance](#) shows that we made good progress measured by our performance indicators and also across key tasks. Using the [data set and indicators in the review](#) we believe we have a stronger story for [1 year improvement](#) than in previous years (up from 54% in 06/07 to 67% in 07/08). This means that 33% of performance measured by the data set is static or declining in 2007/8, however, [27% measured by the data set represents top quartile performance](#) in comparison with other Councils, this is an increase of 6% on 06/07.

We ensure delivery of our priorities through clear plans for action, with key tasks delivered over the last 12 months including:

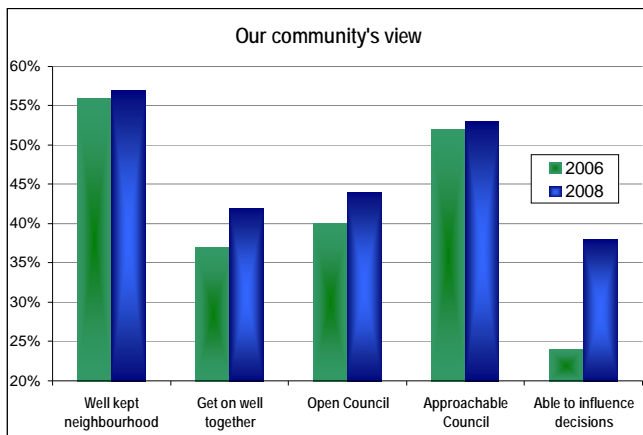
- Neighbourhood level working, with our partners known as the "PACT"¹ and its [roll-out approach](#).
- A key plank of our public transformation project, the Joint Service Centre is on [course](#) with a preferred developer selected.
- To support our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, strategic planning and decision making we have developed a locality-based management information system [W.I.S.D.O.M.](#)² In addition, we have also held a [series of workshops](#) with key partners to identify needs in the borough and to develop action plans to address those needs.
- To strengthen our partnership arrangements and ensure effective delivery of our [Local Area Agreement](#), we have [revised our LSP architecture](#) with our partners.
- We conducted innovative consultation with our community to identify Wigan's priorities and reviewed the [Sustainable Community Strategy](#) to identify how we will address the key issues facing the borough.
- Outcomes continue to improve in environmental cleanliness and levels of recyclates collected
- We continue to support personalisation and choice by radically increasing the number of adults in receipt of direct payments from 147 in 2006 to 535 in 2008.
- Our approach to equality and diversity has been validated at Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard.
- The [support services review](#) has, so far, delivered savings of £1.2m, and further savings will arise when the implementation of revised structures, efficiency reviews and business process re-engineering (BPR) begin to take effect. The savings have been re-directed into frontline priority areas such as customer services, equality and diversity, programme support, records management, environmental services call centre and internet technology.
- We have created an innovative partnership between Ashton, Leigh and Wigan Primary care trust and the Council through the creation of a [Single Commissioning Agency](#). This will secure improved and joined up services for local people.
- We have undertaken a comprehensive review of activities previously funded to meet neighbourhood renewal priority needs.
- We are moving rapidly with our Building schools for the future programme and have successfully partnered with Salford to create our Joint Local Education Partnership.

¹ Partnership and Communities Together

² Wigan Information System for Dynamic Online Maps

Our community

We constantly assess our [residents' views](#) using a range of methodologies. This feedback is used to inform our service improvements and ultimately customer satisfaction.



We recognise that we need to:

- Develop our cohesion strategy further as 81% of residents surveyed through the citizens panel feel it is important that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood, however only 64% stated that they actually felt that they belonged to their respective neighbourhood.
- Ensure that our successful locality work and [PACT1](#) approach is rolled out so that [by January 2009 every ward will have an operating PACT](#).
- With our key partners, deliver locally identified priorities through the [10 Township Forums](#), and their [local action plans](#) which will also enable us to continue to develop our close engagement with communities and neighbourhoods.

Helping people reach their full potential

Children and Young People

We increased the number of young people attaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. In 2007 we supported 60.8% of young people to reach this standard and results suggest we have delivered further improvements to over 65% in 2008.³

- We reduced the proportion of 16-18 yr olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) to 8.16%; exceeding our challenging target of 8.8%.
- We secured much better attendance at schools, beating the national average. The [DCSF data](#) has identified Wigan as the most improved "priority" authority this year.
- Excellent progress has been made in reducing the achievement gap for young people at risk of poverty, based on free school meals. The achievement gap at

KS4 in 2007 based on achieving 5+ A*-C was 29.5%, compared with around 35% from 2004-2006.

- Our approach to ensure looked after children (LAC) is secure and stable are proving effective, with our performance reducing the number of LAC with 3 or more placements from 13% in 06/07 to 10.8% in 2008 with 74% in the same placement for 2 or more years.
- We continue to improve our timeliness in completing initial assessment for children in need, with 78.1% currently completed within 7 days (72.6% in 2007-08). The number of core assessments completed in time (whilst still below 2007 comparator averages; England - 78%; statistical neighbours - 85%), increased from 44% to 70% in 2007/08. Performance during 2008/09 continues to improve, with the latest data demonstrating further improvements to 80%.
- Attainment of our LAC is now above the national average at Key Stages 1-4.³
- The health of our LAC is important to us, and we have increased the numbers receiving health and dental checks during the year to 74% in 2008.

Though we have achieved many successes, areas for further improvement identified in our [Children and Young People's Plan](#) and LAA include:

- Continuing the reduction in rates of teenage conception by securing more rapid improvement through delivery of our comprehensive [teenage pregnancy action plan](#).
- Ensuring that our looked after children are able to achieve economic well-being by increasing the percentage attaining 5+A*-C, including English and Maths, from 0% in 2007/08 to 24% in 2008/09.
- Continuing to narrow gaps in attainment between our most disadvantaged communities and the rest of the Borough.
- Strengthening the quality and effectiveness of social care through prevention and early intervention.
- Improving the provision of positive activities for young people, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and increasing the proportion of young people involved in youth work activities from 13.8% to 15% in 2008/09.
- Increasing participation and attainment post-16 through our 14-19 strategy and enhanced partnership working.
- Procurement of a Joint Local Education Partnership with Salford is underway. This will take forward our Building Schools for the Future programme and provide us with an opportunity to transform the learning environments of our secondary schools.

³ This was a key priority in LAA 1

Services for Adults

Our highly successful [Partnerships for Older Peoples Project Scheme](#) provided preventative support to over 9,000 people.

- Residential and nursing care admissions continue to fall from 97 in 06/07 to 91 in 07/08.
- We helped secure a massive additional benefit take up totalling £1.5m, for over 3,500 people directed through Age Concern's benefits advice service.

In response to the last [Annual Review Meeting](#) with CSCI, we have continued to improve our safeguarding systems for vulnerable adults, increased the scope of our advocacy services and have put arrangements in place to ensure a rapid response to complaints.

Despite this success, we are not complacent and recognise that we need to:

- Increase the number of extra care housing places.
- Improve the waiting times for assessment for all service user groups.
- Further reduce the costs of intensive home care whilst maintaining our high quality service.
- Actively seek out and provide support to individuals with caring responsibilities.
- Implement and incorporate the findings of our [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) for the Borough so as to enhance our already effective targeting of resources and service provision.
- We did not achieve our LAA 1 target for unplanned bed days; therefore a [comprehensive review of Hospital Discharge](#) has taken place, with recommendations to reduce waiting times. We will also focus on continuing to improve care pathways and the management of long term conditions.

Building Strong Communities

Community Leadership

New strategic management arrangements have been established following the [LSP review](#). In addition, the newly established third sector formal liaison committee has undertaken a [review of 3rd sector capacity](#) (facilitated by the IDeA) and work has commenced on implementing a Partnership Improvement Plan to take this work forward. Key areas of focus here relate to strategic commissioning and to the updating and deployment of the 3rd sector [COMPACT](#).

A Select Committee [review of Townships](#) has produced a series of recommendations that the Council is now consulting on. The [proposals](#) include linking the Townships to the Council's Constitution to formalise the relationship and use the Townships as a major consultation and engagement vehicle for setting priorities.

There has also been consultation to strengthen the role of [Scrutiny](#) to take account of the recent white papers on community empowerment. The proposals will see the creation of Scrutiny Committees linked to the thematic LSP partnerships.

Cohesion

Following the formation of Wigan's Cohesion Commission in 2006, a new framework for Cohesion has been developed by the LSP in response to the Commission's report, "Embracing Change". The LSP has publicly made clear commitment to this area of work and we are working with the IDeA to improve this further in 08/09. We have also provided extensive equality and diversity training for Elected Member. Two successful initiatives in the past year include:

- A broad programme of local community festivals facilitated with our Leisure and Culture Trust and partners from local BME communities. Key amongst these festivals are [Wigan's One World](#) and [Leigh Mela](#).
- [The Leigh neighbours project](#) has enabled a community experiencing a rapid increase in migrant workers and BME populations to understand itself and to be more aware of cohesion issues.

Community Safety

Our focus has been to reduce overall crime, the harm caused by illegal drugs and burglary rates, whilst reassuring the public and reducing the fear of crime. We are aware that during the period 07/08 burglary rates have increased by 9% (from 1615 incidents to 1792); burglary reduction will therefore continue to be one of our key priorities. We have seen continued successful outcomes:

- Our interventions have reduced vehicle crimes markedly by 16.6% (from 4626 in 06/07 to 3856 in 07/08) coupled with a large reduction (22%) in thefts from a vehicle over the same period
- Our focus on burglary reduction has resulted in a reduction of rates of 7% for April to August 08 when compared with the same period last year.
- Through our Proactive Target Hardening Scheme⁴ 1719 households have been hardened in 2007/08 with only 44 experiencing a burglary after the intervention (a rate of 11.6 per 1000 compared to 68.7 per 1000 for those households who declined the offer).
- Our highly successful alley gates project scheme gated over 180 priority sites resulting in a 61.54% reduction in burglaries, 58.29% reduction in criminal damage and 91.48% reduction in antisocial behaviour.

⁴ Proactive target hardening – the installation of, for example, effective locks, window closers.

Places people want to live

As we move forward, other key priorities will include the reduction of local priority crime, particularly serious violent crimes (we will reduce these from 108 in 2007/08 to 97.2 in 10/11) and new targets for reducing crimes committed by prolific and priority offenders and the reduction in the number of entrants into the youth justice system (aged 10-17years) will be determined in our new LAA.

Leisure and Culture

We have, with our partners, developed a comprehensive [Impact Framework](#), which ensures continued focus on our LAA priorities and introduces a methodology to effectively measure the impact of services.

We can report significant improvements in performance for 2007/08, for example:

- Library visits continue to increase and we have encouraged a 3% increase in library visits from 3882.65 in 06/07 to 3990.56 in 07/08
- Following the introduction of free swimming in 2006 the number of senior swims continues to rise. We have experienced an increase of 7% over the last year which represents a 19% rise since 2006.
- We continue to improve our public open spaces and this was recognised by the achievement of green flag status at Alexander and Pennington Hall Parks.
- Public interest in Arts events and festivals is reflected in the number of admissions which has increased 6% from 203.98 in 06/07 to 217.71 in 07/08.
- Our thriving physical activity programme for sedentary adults has seen a massive increase in participation, up 32% in the last year. This equates to 3630 individuals against target of 2750.
- Participation in the steps to health scheme has also seen a 6% increase from 1641 in 06/07 to 1734 in 07/08.
- The Greenspaces team have had their excellent work recognised by being announced as finalists for the 2008 North West Business Excellence Awards.

In order to improve our outcomes further we have:

- Implemented a new customer focused [learning strategy for Heritage Services](#) following the successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to refurbish the History Shop. This has already increased participation, with 1,418 visits to workshops, events and activities through the outreach programme in the first quarter of 08/09.
- Introduced a [new parks strategy](#) which is aimed at increasing public satisfaction and usage of parks and open spaces. We are aiming to obtain another green flag award in 2009 through the multi million pound redevelopment of Mesnes Park.

Waste and street scene

Improving the management of waste continues to be a priority in Wigan, with emphasis on the reduction of residual household waste in the new LAA. Outcomes and achievements from last year include:

- We supplied an additional 16,000 properties with green bins during 07/08. We now have 110,000 green bins in use at properties across the borough. This means that all households that have requested green bins now have and are using them.
- We have invested £175,000 to pilot a kerbside collection of dry recyclables (glass, cans and plastics) across 13,000 properties within the Borough. The great success of the scheme has contributed to our significant increase in the amount of household waste recycled, from 12.92% in 2006/07 to 16.08% in 2007/08. Further funding has been secured to expand the services to an additional 57,000 properties in 2008/09 and a further 20,000 properties in 2009/10.
- We have maintained our excellent improvements in the local environment, the % of land classed as "significantly littered" reduced from 20.5% in 2006/07 to 14.6% in 2007/08 and the % of land with unacceptable levels of graffiti reduced from 13% in 2006/07 to 9.3% currently.

We recognise that we must continue to increase the pace of improvement of our local environment and to direct our resources more effectively to localities and priorities through enhanced community engagement, PACT's and Township work.

Roads and Transport

We continue to produce successful outcomes in our roads and transport infrastructure.

- Our transport objectives for 2006/07 – 2010/11 are set out in The Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan which was endorsed by the DfT in March 2006. The initiatives contained in the plan are funded by the highways capital programme and were developed in full consultation with townships.
- Our innovative town centre road safety and accessibility improvements continue to be rolled out; [Standish](#) was completed in 2007 and [Hindley](#) is scheduled for completion in 2008.
- We far exceeded our targets for improving the condition of principal and non-principal classified roads, with reported results of 5.4% and 4.05% respectively, surpassing targets of 12% and 11.8%.
- Similarly we surpassed our targets for improving the condition of unclassified roads and the busiest footways in the borough resulting in a 9.0% target

down to a 4.8% result and a 13% target down to a 9.8% result respectively

- This excellent performance is reflected in continuing [high rates of customer satisfaction](#) on highways maintenance schemes. Before works started 16% of residents expressed satisfaction with the appearance of the streets with 70% indicating their dissatisfaction. After the works customer satisfaction had increased greatly to 88%.
- Our Highways drainage service remains the best performer in Greater Manchester, responding to 99.8% of enquiries within 10 working days.
- Our street lighting repairs are now concluded even more quickly, the average time seeing an overall reduction of 20.7% from 4.23 days in 2005/06 to 3.36 days in 2007/08
- Time taken to attend and complete planned maintenance works has seen also seen huge reduction of 28.5% from 35 days in 2005/06 to 25 days in 2007/08.

Even though we have performed well in this area, we will continue to set tougher targets. For example, best value indicators for unclassified roads and busiest footways will be retained to assess future performance. Targets for 2008/09 have been set at a challenging 4.5% and 9.0% respectively.

We can report a pleasing 26% improvement in performance in relation to BV99a (road casualties) for 2007/08 as we continue to implement successful measures to reduce the number of accidents. For example

- We have introduced an [Annual mass action programme](#) to effectively reduce accidents in locations which have similar collision problems.
- We have created a [prioritisation tool](#) for area wide [traffic calming](#) schemes which ensures that resources are targeted at areas of greatest need.
- Road safety education remains a key aspect of [our approach](#). In 2007/08 we invested £70,000 into an Environmental education team to provide education and training on road safety. Working closely with the Road Safety Team in 2007/08 we engaged with 22,500 children (primary and secondary school age) compared with 18,957 the previous year. A real outcome of this work is that we are beginning to see a correlation in reductions in the number of children in road accidents and a 62% reduction in child road accidents compared against a target reduction of 29.7%.
- We have also taken a proactive approach to preventing road collisions assisted with the establishment of a partnership [Road Safety Forum](#).

Environmental education is an important strand of our ongoing work to engage with, involve and to mobilise the community.

- We remain on course to achieve our challenging target of having 100% of schools registered on the [Eco-Schools Programme](#) by July 2011. Currently, 63% of the Borough's schools are registered.
- In order to promote the environment and healthy living, over 800 pupils at 16 schools have taken part in "reconnecting to nature" which involves growing food and learning about where food comes from.
- We were one of 15 successful Local Authorities to gain on-street advertising (to the value of approximately £25,000) from Defra for our anti-chewing gum litter campaign.
- We have enabled 24 town centre businesses to sign up to the trial Tidy Business Zone scheme. The scheme assesses environmental performance and encourages businesses to undertake work for the wider community. So far, 7 businesses have successfully achieved bronze, 4 silver and 3 gold awards. The scheme will be rolled out to the other main town centres over the next 2 years.
- 920 pupils across 19 schools (mainly in deprived areas) have engaged in anti-litter lessons which have assisted in community engagement and promotion of environmental issues.

Housing

A combination of new national and regional housing policy objectives and the impact of the credit crunch have created a challenging agenda. In order to meet these challenges, our [Housing Strategy](#) is being [reviewed](#) and this will result in a more integrated approach to achieve the LAA targets and sub regional MAA objectives.

Despite the recent economic challenges, we continue to improve our services:

- Housing conditions continue to improve strongly. The proportion of public sector non-decent homes has improved from 12% in 06/07 to 10% in 07/08 and we expect to achieve the >95% decency target in 09/10.
- We have successfully reduced the numbers of homeless people from 1035 in 06/07 to 715 in 07/08 and accordingly, our expenditure on bed and breakfast accommodation has dropped markedly from £184k in 05/06 to £67k in 07/08.
- Our [housing management performance](#) continues to show excellent improvements.
- Wigan contributes strongly to the developing sub regional housing strategy and the housing aspects of the [Multi Area Agreement](#) (MAA) by recognising the regional agenda in our Housing strategies and LAA.

- The Greater Manchester Expression of Interest in a New Housing Growth Point has been successful, and Wigan has played a key role in this. The Government has now invited the submission of detailed Programmes of Development which Wigan will be developing in conjunction with the 10 Greater Manchester Authorities.

In order to maintain our excellent performance we know that certain issues need to be tackled effectively. The recent [Housing Needs Survey](#) and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment confirm the shortage of affordable housing in Wigan and the wide-ranging [Affordable Housing Strategy](#) is aimed at ensuring that supply will meet demand. Due to the current economic climate we are experiencing effects upon the local housing market e.g. increase in vacant housing, reduction in new development activity and repossession activity. Our strategies will be developed to address these pressing concerns.

Wider economic factors

A key priority for Wigan, the Economic Partnership and the LAA is to reduce worklessness.

- The Partnership has produced a wide-ranging [“What makes Wigan Work” Worklessness Strategy – \(timetable of activities\)](#) to develop and target our interventions even more effectively.
- The [Community Mental Health Project](#) is starting to have an impact on the levels of worklessness in the Borough. The three months ending Feb 2008 has seen a big improvement in [previous Incapacity Benefit claimants, living in deprived areas, with mental health conditions now in work](#). This equates to 45 people (representing 1.9% of the population living in deprived areas) moving from claiming Incapacity Benefit to gaining sustained employment.
- The Local Development Framework will effectively identify significant levels of new and sustainable employment locations. The [‘Core Strategy Issues and Options’](#) and the [Wigan South Central Masterplan](#) will assist in the delivery of major development opportunities in the west of the Borough.
- Wigan has contributed clearly to and formally adopted the Manchester MAA which sets economic targets and direction at the conurbation level.
- We have effectively encouraged new business start ups which have seen a huge increase from 18 in 06/07 to 100 in 07/08.

In order to build on our successes we will continue to develop skills (recognised in our LAA as a key priority) thereby enabling more local people to take advantage of new employment opportunities particularly in growth sectors such as creative digital new media, environmental

technology, logistics, construction, retail and sport & leisure. In addition, although the current economic climate will mean this will be increasingly difficult, we will make certain that we will continue to attract major investors to stimulate the Wigan economy further.

In December 2007, Wigan signed up and is now working collaboratively to develop the [Skills Pledge](#) and the Get On Local Government Award with nine other AGMA authorities.

Planning

- Our performance against [key planning indicators](#) remains high and in the top quartile for Metropolitan Authorities. We have increased the number of major planning applications dealt with in 13 weeks to 85% in 2007/08 from 74% in 2006/07. We have also improved our response times for minor planning applications with 91% being resolved in 8 weeks compared to 88% in 2006/07.
- We exceeded our target for the development of new homes built on “brownfield” with a 92% results against a target of 75%.
- In 07/08 we established a new sustainability team to work across the Council and with partner agencies to embed sustainability in policy and practices. A strategy to help reduce the carbon footprint of the Council and the Borough will be developed in 2008/09, and as part of this we will develop and pilot a sustainability impact matrix to be applied to all project/programme work

Accountability and effective service support

Efficiency and Value for Money

We have completed our [2008 value for money self assessment](#) which concludes that the Council continues to over achieve on delivery of efficiency targets, delivers above average services for comparatively low cost, and where spending is higher there are clear reasons why. There is a clear trend of improvement with respect to our value for money achievements. Key outcomes and achievements in the last year include:

- All “back office”⁵ functions have been subjected to a comprehensive review ([Support Services Review](#)). This has resulted in significant savings of £738,000 being realised in 07/08, with an additional £465,000 in the first quarter of 08/09. Some of the savings have been re-allocated to fund priorities like customer services, equality and diversity, programme support, records management, environmental services call centre and voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology

⁵ “Back office” functions are those which provide support to front-line service delivery,

- We will build on VFM improvement work and our [draft improvement and efficiency strategy](#) will ensure our successful approach is embedded across the organisation.
- A new [Corporate Procurement Strategy](#) now incorporates the crucial wider agendas of equalities, sustainability, promoting the local economy and carbon management.

Standards

The Standards Committee has successfully led positive work with elected Members which resulted in a significant decrease in complaints by Members (one since April 08). There has also been a real improvement in the political dialogue. No significant breaches of the Code of Conduct have been found in the last year.

Electronic Access

The implementation of our new customer relationship management (CRM) system will assist with our ongoing improvements to streamline the reporting and resolution of issues identified by service providers and the public. Full integration of the CRM with back-office systems and mobile devices will significantly speed up our business processes. We continue to expand the successful use of mobile working technology and wireless access throughout the Borough for employees working 'in the field' coupled with VoIP telephony which allows staff to work more effectively from offices and home. Together, these initiatives, and the Council's policy on [flexible working](#), will improve our service delivery whilst contributing to the [work-life balance](#) and sustainability agenda.

Accommodation Strategy

We have undertaken a comprehensive review of our corporate office accommodation. Detailed feasibility work is progressing alongside the development of a full business case which will fundamentally change our accommodation provision, whilst providing value for money, assisting with service transformation and improving our accessibility. (We have 92 buildings that fall within the criteria of the Disability Discrimination Act. Performance on BVPI 156 is currently 25%, an improvement from 16% in 2005/06. Our target for 2008/09 is 38%).

Sickness absence

Whilst the number of days lost to sickness absence (BV012) has reduced from 12.81 in 06/07 to 11.61 in 07/08, we recognise that this is still comparatively poor performance. Accordingly, we are undertaking a comprehensive review of the current sickness procedures and management arrangements. This will report in November 2008.

Budget performance

We continue to maintain a high level of financial management and reporting. The Audit Commission Use of Resources Statement 2007 recognised this in conjunction with the quality procedures in use at the Council and awarded a level 4 for financial reporting.

The budget process continues to evolve with more emphasis now being placed upon service challenges and the redirection of resources to meet those challenges. The budget forecast / [medium term financial plan](#) is an early indicator of the issues that face the Council in the delivery of its services. At an even earlier stage this process is underpinned by the quarterly budget monitoring statements submitted to Cabinet throughout the year.

The Council has maintained a strong financial position during the financial year 2007/08 and has reported a surplus of £4.4m. This surplus will assist in the Council's future budget strategy and strengthen the level of balances held.

Priorities for 2008/11

Our [Corporate Plan \(2008-11\)](#) sets out the priorities for the Council, with increased emphasis on the customer and partners. The revised priorities still retain elements from the 2007/08 Plan, (listed at the beginning of this document) however; the focus is now captured by 5 main priorities:

- Helping people to reach their full potential
- Enabling stronger community leadership
- Providing places people want to live
- Setting high standards of accountability
- Providing effective support for services

Chief Officers of the Council have been allocated specific strategic tasks as part of the [Corporate Improvement Programme](#) and to assist with the delivery of these priorities.

This contributes to the delivery of the revised Sustainable Community Strategy which aims to develop a strong community that encourages people to raise their aspirations and equips them with the skills and opportunities to become the people they want to be.

In light of the comments and associated information above, which details our sustained high performance in priority areas, our self-awareness, continued improvement and drive for efficiency we consider that Wigan Council continues to improve well.

We can make this information available in other formats
and languages on request.

For further information relating to this plan please contact:

Alan Dunn
Chief Executives Services
01942 827773
a.dunn@wigan.gov.uk

www.wigan.gov.uk